sense that no spiritual beings other than *Tien* or *Shang Ti* could be worshiped. Moreover, varying conceptions existed of the Supreme Power. By some, probably the majority, it was held to be personal, but at least a few conceived it as entirely impersonal.

The duty owed to the spiritual beings was believed to be largely ceremonial. Ritual correctly performed was regarded as extremely important. Music and posturing, along with sacrifices of food and even, on occasion, of human beings, had their place. At least before the close of the Chou dynasty—whether as a late development or as a heritage from the past is in dispute—an ethical element entered and Heaven was believed to be displeased with violations of the moral code.

The correct performance of the ceremonies and other duties owed to spiritual beings was declared essential to the welfare of man. All nature was thought of as an orderly whole, a universe. If this universe were to be kept functioning properly man must do his part—a part in which both ritual and loyalty to moral obligations were important. If man failed to perform his duty the machinery of the universe would be disarranged and natural disasters of various kinds would ensue, such as floods, drought, and the failure of crops.

Ceremonies were of many kinds and grades. Each class or group in society had those appropriate to it. No one must infringe upon those of another or the harmony of nature would be disturbed. The head of the state, the various territorial princes, and members of the feudal aristocracy were especially charged—or privileged—with specific religious functions. Yet no priestly class emerged. There were those particularly well versed in ritual whose function it was to

assist in its direction. There were professional diviners, experts in the various methods of discovering by lot or oracle the proper course of action. However, no specialized group existed as in ancient Egypt or India which depended for its prestige and power upon a monopoly of the approach to the spirits, gods, and divine forces. Officiation at religious ceremonies formed part of the prerogative of those charged with the civil, military, and social leadership of society.

We have also seen that in the Chou period various schools of